



2006 Session Priorities

• 12th Legislative District •



Rep. Mike Armstrong

Rep. Cary Condotta

A message from Rep. Mike Armstrong. . .

Dear friends and neighbors:

Difficult issues facing the citizens of our state and the 12th District require strong leadership and the ability to fight for solutions.

You have sent us to Olympia to provide that voice. We are standing firm to represent those issues that matter most to you, such as education, health care, public safety, taxes and spending, the role of government and the rights of citizens.

Frequently it can be challenging as our colleagues across the aisle who control the Legislature don't often see eye to eye with us. From what we saw the first day of the 2006 legislative session, when the majority party sidelined strong new Republican legislation against sex offenders, the contrasts are already showing. However, we continue to reach across the aisle to resolve those differences and provide solutions for all of Washington's citizens.

Before the 2006 session began at the Capitol on Jan. 9, Republican leaders in the House and Senate got together to lay out an agenda that represents our commitment to the citizens of Washington. We've included it on the back page of this newsletter. This agenda and the priorities listed in this newsletter were created after we spent time listening to you – the citizens of our state.

Sincerely,

Rep. Mike Armstrong

Representative Mike Armstrong

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Deputy Republican Leader

Committees:

Appropriations

Rules - Assistant Ranking



A message from Rep. Cary Condotta. . .

Greetings to everyone in the 12th District:

We are off to a busy start of the 60-day session as we find ourselves in an unusual situation – a budget surplus of around \$1.4 billion. The economic policies enacted by the federal government and the fiscal responsibility shown in the 2003 session, served to create the substantial surplus. This extra revenue was generated by consumer spending - thanks to lower taxes and home sales driven by low interest rates. And, we also congratulate Boeing on the positive response to its new products.

So, what do we do with the excess money? This issue will be a major part of the debate this session. We need to consider placing the majority of the reserve where it cannot be spent. Many bills introduced this year could have a negative fiscal impact on our economy and future budgets. As the minority party, we may not be able to stop these bad-policy bills and the cost could be dramatic. What most people do not realize is the state already has a lot of unpaid bills including pension contributions that should be paid now. Aside from the budget, there are also many policy issues that need to be addressed. Several of them are highlighted in this legislative update.

As always, please do not hesitate to call or e-mail my office. Your input has a direct effect on many issues.

Sincerely,

Rep. Cary Condotta

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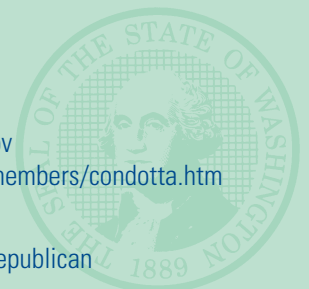
Website: <http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/condotta.htm>

Committees:

Commerce and Labor - Ranking Republican

Finance

Health Care



Restore spending limits in the budget

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Rep. Armstrong is fully involved in supplemental budget discussions. When a two-year budget is passed, no one can anticipate how school enrollments or prison populations will change, or how much the state will spend fighting wildfires. The supplemental budget is intended to make mid-term adjustments to cover those costs.

Trouble is, the supplemental budget proposed by the governor in December would cover much more than the unanticipated costs. It would spend another half-billion dollars on



new programs or services. It's true that the state treasury is nearly a billion-and-a-half dollars in the black – on paper – thanks to a strong real estate

market and construction activity, but we know those will slow. This is no time to add to the state's spending commitments.

Rep. Condotta, who is on the House Finance Committee, and Rep. Armstrong are fighting to restore the tax and spending limits eliminated last year by majority Democrats.

We don't think it is fiscally responsible to spend the surplus on costly new programs or grow government by 500 state employees as the governor has proposed. Instead, we should close the hole in the state's pension system, put away money for a rainy day in a protected account, and repeal last year's tax increases, including the death tax which strikes hard against our local farmers and businesspeople. That's the best way to protect our taxpayers and provide responsible, disciplined budgeting.

Wenatchee stadium assistance sought

Rep. Condotta, a member of the Finance Committee, will be directing efforts to pass legislation allowing Wenatchee to finance a new multi-purpose stadium with existing tax dollars.

While it is nearly impossible to pass such a bill in a short session, we believe this opportunity will be well received. This is one of Rep. Condotta's highest priorities since this project will anchor the entire waterfront project.

Protect children from sex offenders through "Jessica's Law Plus"

Nowhere are the differences between Republicans and majority Democrats more apparent than in public safety. We continue to advocate for stronger laws that lock up criminals so they may no longer hurt victims. The spotlight on those differences shines brightest this year on sex offender legislation.

Democrats have proposed House Bill 2411 which would impose a minimum 25-year sentence for first-degree child molestation or rape – except in cases where the abuser knew the child. The Republican measure we have co-sponsored, House Bill 2476, makes no distinction. It calls for **stronger** penalties ranging from 30 years to life in prison for first-degree rape/molestation of a child, regardless of whether the abuser knew the child.



Mark Lunsford, a Florida man whose 9-year-old daughter Jessica was abducted and killed by a sex offender last year, came to the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee to testify in favor of our Republican bill, called "Jessica's Law Plus," in honor of his daughter.

Democrat lawmakers would like to call their weaker version, "Jessica's Law," but Lunsford begged them not to associate HB 2411 with his daughter.

"Of all the states that I've been to have I ever heard anyone say, 'Well, if you know the victim, we're only going to do this. But if you don't know the victim, this is what you're getting,' said Lunsford to the Democrat chairman of the committee. "This is absurd and it's an insult to my daughter's name. And with all due respect sir, please do not name this bill after my daughter."

In our bill, supported by Lunsford, we've included all of the elements of the original Jessica's Law in Florida, such as mandatory lifetime electronic monitoring, but we go even further to protect children by requiring mandatory sentencing for sex predators whether they are known or unknown by the victim. We don't think that sex-predators who know the victim should be treated any different than strangers, especially since nearly 95 percent of sex crimes against children are committed by someone known to the victim.

HSAs are good medicine for Washington's health care marketplace



After passing Rep. Condotta's HSA bill in the House twice last year we believe we now have the Senate on board to finish the job. There is no better health care reform than HSAs. Our bill will allow everyone to have this option. It will dramatically reduce health care costs in the long-run and increase savings rates.



Rep. Armstrong (center) recently welcomed students from the Bridgeport School District to the state Capitol.

Armstrong AIMS to get tough against Auto theft, Identity theft, Meth

One of Rep. Armstrong's top priorities this session is stronger laws against criminals, including sex offenders and those who engage in drug and theft crimes.

Three of the fastest growing crimes in Washington are auto theft, identity theft and the manufacture and use of methamphetamine. Law enforcement officers tell us these three crimes go hand-in-hand. Often, stolen credit cards and ID are found on criminals arrested for auto theft. Most of the time, these thieves engage in this behavior to support their meth habits.

In 2004, nearly 40 meth labs were discovered within North Central Washington — and those are only the labs we know of. We suspect there are more undiscovered meth labs within our district.

Meth is a big problem in our state, ruining the lives of more people than just the user.

Because these crimes are associated with each other, Rep. Armstrong is pushing for a three-pronged approach — legislation called AIM that imposes tougher sentences against **A**uto theft, **I**dentify theft and **M**eth. It's time to take back our communities and protect the public from these growing crimes.

Water storage options needed



Water storage is a huge issue in North Central Washington. Without water, none of our orchards or local farms can survive. It's also a problem in some of our communities, especially in the Wenatchee Valley. An example is the community of Monitor where some domestic wells are drying up and additional drilling for water has proven useless.

Rep. Armstrong is working with several groups to explore additional water storage options, including the possibility of using one of the canyons in the Wenatchee Valley. He is also supporting a multi-agency task force's effort to extend Chelan County PUD's regional water system to Monitor.

In addition, he is strongly pushing for the removal of the water relinquishment "use it or lose it" law that penalizes farmers who incorporate conservation measures into their farming practices.

We were also very pleased when Attorney General Rob McKenna recently ruled that the Department of Ecology could not impose a 5,000 gallon-per-day limit on the amount of groundwater livestock owners could draw. DOE wanted to impose permits against farmers wanting to water their livestock and fines against those surpassing their limit. McKenna said the department couldn't do it — and so DOE backed down.

Armstrong seeks to eliminate the parks day-use fee

Rep. Armstrong is spearheading an effort to remove the day-use fee in our state parks. From Lake Wenatchee to Lake Chelan and points beyond, we have some of state's most beautiful parks right here in the 12th District. Yet we are continuing to turn people away who cannot afford to pay the day-use fees.

A \$5 fee may not seem like much to some, but to people with low incomes, it may mean that they cannot take their families to enjoy our parks. You and I have already paid for these state parks through our taxes. They belong to every citizen of the state of Washington and should be enjoyed by all, not just those who can afford the day-use fee.

Rep. Armstrong believes this fee should be eliminated and state parks should be re-opened for all of our families.

Local issues in Commerce & Labor Committee

Rep. Condotta serves as ranking Republican in the House Commerce and Labor Committee. We anticipate many major issues will be heard in this committee with direct effects on the 12th District including:

- **Wine Distribution:** A recent ruling by the Supreme Court could threaten the future of our local wineries. Finding a solution to the distribution debate during this session is vital or, the courts will do it for us.
- **Unemployment System:** Rep. Condotta spent a great deal of time this summer on the Unemployment Insurance Task Force and is disappointed that the group still has not been able to find middle ground between the very expensive previous system and seasonal benefit issues under the new system. There is hope that a long-term solution can be found if we take the time to do it right.



Rep. Condotta addresses issues before the House Health Care Committee.

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Rep. Armstrong • Rep. Condotta

Other important local issues

- Tourism – We will continue to promote our tourism bill which would bring us into line with other states producing substantial additional revenues for our district and the state in general.
- Local Government Funding – In the short term, we hope to find ways to assist local governments with funding the ever-expanding mandates. In the long run we need to develop a better tax system which emphasizes our more efficient and controllable local governments.

Republican Commitment to Washington. . .

- Put government on a budget by restoring voter-approved tax and spending limits.
- Protect our kids from sex offenders by passing "Jessica's Law Plus."
- Give health care back to patients by allowing affordable, tailored choices that work best for them and their families.
- Get government out of the way of job growth by removing the regulatory burden on small business, repealing the death tax, and reforming unemployment.
- AIM for safer neighborhoods through enhanced penalties for **A**uto theft, **I**dentify theft and **M**ethamphetamine production.
- Welcome families to our state parks by eliminating the day-use fee.
- Help every student achieve WASL standards and graduate on time by offering remedial classes, tutors, and expanded summer school programs.
- Help needy families by reducing energy costs.
- Allow citizens and their elected representatives – not the courts – to decide the definition of marriage.
- Protect property rights and prevent government from taking property without compensation.
- Strengthen the family farm by providing tax relief, allowing families to use their land as intended, and ensuring access to water.



We're here to serve as well as represent you!

Please take the time to write or call whenever you have a question, a concern or an idea to share. Hearing from the people in our district is the only way we can be sure to represent your best interests.

Also let us know if you have a problem when dealing with state government or a state agency. One of the ways we can serve you is by helping direct you to the proper state agency and by attempting to get a response to your problem.

We can't promise to always get the answer you want out of government – but we are always ready to lend a helping hand.

**Toll-free
Legislative Hotline:
1-800-562-6000**



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